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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 005155

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PNAT](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ALLAWI AND SUNNI ARAB PARTIES CONSIDER BROADER COALITION

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert Ford for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Sunni Arab political party leaders reported to PolOffs December 29 that they are headed towards a government coalition alliance with both Ayad Allawi's National Iraqi List and the Kurdish Alliance and eventually later with the Shia Islamists. However, our Sunni Arab contacts also stress that they need a serious investigation and "more balanced" results of the December 15 election. Allawi aides told us they await talks with the Kurds about joining a coalition government, and one top aide mused to us December 29 about being in a loyal opposition. We think Allawi is still interested in joining a coalition. END SUMMARY.

Iraqi Islamic Party Moving on Two Tracks Now

2. (C) Ayad Samarai, number two in the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), told PolOff December 29 that the his party needs a serious response to its call for an international investigation of the December 15 election results. Without such a response, he feared, the Sunni Arab public would not understand subsequent Islamic Party cooperation with or in the next government. He added that the IIP had agreed with President Talabani to move forward simultaneously on two paths: one, to investigate claims of electoral fraud while also moving on a path towards discussing the formation of a new government.

3. (C) Samarai confirmed they had planned to attend meetings this week for negotiations with Allawi in Sulaymaniyah and the Kurds in Irbil, but they did not attend due to logistical problems. Samarai said they plan to meet soon with Allawi and the Kurds.

Sunni Arabs and International Monitors

4. (C) Samarai also relayed that Tawafuq leaders will meet Saturday with UN experts reviewing IECI's vote-counting process. He said there was a productive three hour meeting December 28 with the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General Ashraf Qazi and other major political coalitions - National Dialogue and Tawafuq - to pressure Qazi for more international elections review experts.

5. (C) Samarai welcomed the news from PolOff that the Ambassador had yesterday personally asked SRSG Qazi and the election commission to bring more international observers to Iraq to review the process. Samarai said this would have a very helpful psychological effect among Iraq's Sunni Arab community to get them to accept the election results. He said it will show that Tawafuq - the most influential of the Sunni Arab blocs - can influence the IECI. The goal of the Tawafuq, Samarai emphasized, is a national unity government. (Comment: Tariq al-Hashemi, the head of the IIP, separately told PolCouns December 29 that the news that the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) were sending more people was very positive. We are trying to get Hashemi to issue a press statement late December 29 to this effect. End Comment.)

Negotiating a Government

6. (C) Mahmoud Mashadani, a member of the Iraqi Council of National Dialogue (ICND), told PolOff December 29 they want to form a broader coalition with Allawi and the Kurds, but their goal is to ensure that Allawi doesn't get his choice for the new ministers of Interior and Defense. Mashadani said they might announce such a coalition soon. He added that National Dialog Council members were meeting today to list their own candidates for the two ministerial positions.

7. (C) Sheik Abdul Nasir al-Janabi, a harder line member of the ICND, told PolOff December 29 that Sunnis are 40 percent of Iraq's population, and 50 percent of Baghdad's population. Thus, he wanted the seat allocation in the

Council of Representatives to reflect this. Despite PolOff's reply that the Sunni Arab percentage of Iraq is much smaller, al-Janabi persisted. (Note: Abdel Nasser reflects what we hear from many Sunni contacts that are having trouble accepting that Baghdad, built by Jafar al-Mansur, a Sunni Arab general 1,300 years ago, is now a majority Shia city. End Comment.)

18. (C) Dr. Hassan al-Bazazz, a Tawafuq member and University of Baghdad Political Science professor, told PolOff December 29 that the mood within the Tawafuq until yesterday had been optimistic about forming an alliance with Allawi and the Kurds. But after statements by Masoud Barzani and Abdulaziz al-Hakim yesterday implying the Kurds and Shia are less enthusiastic about this alliance, the Tawafuq members felt as if they are "back to square one." (Comment: al-Hakim told the Kurdish parliament on December 28 that the next government should be a national unity government but that ministerial distribution within the government should be based on election results. Sunni Arabs want to have more than roughly 1/5 of the key government posts. End Comment.)

MARAM TO MEET DECEMBER 31 - URGED TO ISSUE STATEMENT
WELCOMING OBSERVERS AND PROMISING TO COOPERATE

19. (C) Ibrahim al-Janabi, Chief of Staff to Dr. Ayad Allawi, told PolOff December 29 that the MARAM group - which is comprised of the National Iraqi List, Tawafuq, the National Dialogue, and over 40 smaller political entities - will meet again December 31. The group has not met since December 26. PolOff urged al-Janabi to have MARAM issue a statement that welcomes the international monitors from the International Mission for Iraqi Elections (IMIE) and promises to cooperate with them. Al-Janabi agreed that political parties must accept the conclusions of any report issued by the monitors. Al-Janabi also said the National Iraqi List is prepared to meet with the international monitors. (Comment: Allawi told the Ambassador December 29 that he would issue a statement welcoming the stepped up international role in reviewing the election process. End Comment.)

110. (C) Al-Janabi said that Dr. Allawi still has not been invited to Sulaymaniyah to meet with President Talabani. He added that is the democratic right of the largest parties (the Shia and Kurdish Alliances) to negotiate with each other, but he sees two possible outcomes: (1) these two parties form a government, but they must allow those excluded to be a real opposition (mentioning the idea of a shadow government); and (2) these two parties invite the others to join a national unity government, but it must be based on the idea of equal shares for the government formation/ministry distribution, regardless of their success at the ballot box. (Note: It is still not clear if Al-Janabi believes the National Iraqi List would be one of these entities, or whether these would be limited in practice to the Shia Alliance, the Sunni Arab bloc, and the Kurdish Alliance. End Note.)

111. (C) Comment: We have been urging the Sunni Arab Tawaffuq, the Allawi camp and the Kurds all to link up before negotiating with the Shia. We sense progress in that area although it is slow. There is more progress between the Allawi camp and the Sunni Arabs, but that results in part from their all being in Baghdad, and the Kurdish leadership being up north. Despite posturing by lower-level Sunni Arabs leaked into western press, the political party leaders reiterated today their desire to form a national unity government with fair representation. Their main concern at the moment, however, is to show their constituencies that they are pressuring the IECI to produce transparent, accurate election results. Their response to increased international observer participation through UN efforts is encouraging. This stepped-up role could give credibility to the elections results within the potentially volatile Sunni Arab community.

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